



FIRST THINGS FIRST

The right system for bright futures

Date of Submission: October 31, 2008
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What is First Things First?

Just about anyone you talk to agrees that children are one of the most valuable resources any community has. For Apache people, our children will be the ones to carry on the language and culture but will also be responsible for leading our people into the future. As a result, it is important to ensure that children have everything they need to be successful during their adolescent years as well as later in life. This effort can come in many forms and First Things First is creating a system to ensure children are healthy, safe and ready to learn when they get to kindergarten.

First Things First is a brand new state agency that aims to ensure all Arizona children birth through age five are afforded opportunities to achieve their maximum potential to succeed in school and life. At First Things First, we seek to achieve this vision by increasing the quality of, and access to, early childhood development and health systems, that ensure a child entering school comes healthy and ready to succeed. First Things First was established by the passage of Proposition 203, which allows for an additional \$0.81 tax on every tobacco product purchased in the state. The proposition was passed with a statistical landslide of 52 percent of voters, who agreed that investing in children is worth our time and money. Additionally, Proposition 203 had the strongest bi-partisan support in the history of ballot initiatives, proving that improving the health and well-being of Arizona children doesn't belong only to one political party.

First Things First is unlike other state agencies in that we believe a top-down approach isn't the most effective way to ensure children birth through age five are receiving what they need in order to develop and thrive. As a result, the State Board for First Things First has established 31 Regional Partnership Councils throughout the state to determine which needs are the most pressing in their areas. The Regional Partnership Councils are made up of community members who represent various aspects of the community ranging from parents, child care providers, educators, members of the faith community and business people. The Regional Partnership Council is responsible for determining the needs of their geographic area and then creating a strategic plan that will address those needs. From that point, funds are allocated to begin addressing the early childhood needs of each region.

Currently, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council is working to complete their strategic plan and finalize their funding amounts. By the spring of 2009, requests for grant applicants

(RFGAs) will begin rolling out in the community to start addressing some of the highest priority areas for the region. Any community agency, whether it is Tribal, Federal or other will have the opportunity to apply for the funds. Additionally, community members, who feel they can meet the needs as outlined in the RFGA, will also be encouraged to apply for funding. Once all applications have been submitted and approved, funds will begin being disbursed in July 2009.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council has been working very hard to prioritize the needs of children ages 0-5 in our region in order to ensure funds are spent where they are needed most. As the early childhood system begins to grow and develop, so too will the priorities of the community. As a result, the Regional Partnership Council will review their funding plan annually to determine whether or not funds need to be re-allocated or whether or not new needs have arisen.

Should you have any questions or would like more information about First Things First, please feel free to contact Rochelle Lacapa at (928) 532-5041 or via email at rlacapa@azftf.gov.